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# Renaissance Montessori Parent Handbook 2011-2012



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Renaissance Montessori, admits students of any race, color, national and/or ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at our school. Renaissance Montessori does not discriminate in any way on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin or in the administration of its educational policies, scholarship and loan programs, athletic, and/or any other school - administered programs.



## **1.0 Introduction**

### **1.1 Our Mission**

#### *Cultivate a Love of Life... Inspire Academic Excellence*

Renaissance Montessori is an independent Montessori school, which embodies principles of best practice in Montessori education.

Our goal is to nurture intelligence, curiosity, creativity and imagination while supporting and developing each student's unique talents. Our ultimate mission is to prepare students for life.

Renaissance Montessori teaches universal values and instills a global perspective and responsible citizenship. Our aim is to help develop young people who are balanced between their knowledge and character: lifelong learners, critical thinkers, and active leaders in their local community, their country, and the world.

### **1.2 Educational Philosophy**

Our program rests on four pillars:

We cultivate within our students a passion for excellence in everything they do, both in and outside of school;

We nurture among our students a strongly held set of universal values, which include self-respect, respect for others, honesty, integrity, responsibility, empathy, compassion, kindness,

peacefulness, a sense of concern for others, warmth, and a love of community;

We help our students to develop a global perspective and international understanding; with this goes a sense of connection to the Earth and a commitment to stewardship of the environment;

We encourage our students to make a lifelong commitment to contribute to society in meaningful ways.

#### **Renaissance Montessori offers:**

##### **A Second Language**

Spanish will be integral to all activities in the classroom.

##### **A Diverse School Community within an Independent School Setting**

Our goal is to draw together children and families from throughout the Triangle community in an independent school.

##### **Sustainability**

We place emphasis on creating a sustainable environment.

We emphasize organic gardening.

Students are taught ongoing lessons on living a life that is more in harmony with a sustainable environment.



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## **A Family-Friendly School**

We run a 12-month school year for all students, though summer months may have differences in schedule, fees or program.

We will offer extended-day programs for working families, and we may offer optional care on days when school is not in session.

## **A Montessori, Partnership-Based School Community**

All of our administrative and board decisions are based on clear, written, and commonly understood values and principles of Montessori partnership.

All members of our school community (faculty, students, parents, and the leaders of the school) are invited to participate in a partnership-based process of ongoing discussion, planning, problem solving, and self-study/program evaluation.

In a partnership-based Montessori community, we are a 'Circle of Equals.' Every voice will be heard in an environment of kindness and respect as we search for the best solutions.

On an ongoing basis, parents, teachers, and students are invited to participate in monthly community meetings.

We schedule many opportunities to come together in celebration as a community.

## **Renaissance Montessori's Relationship with The Montessori Foundation**

To ensure continuity of educational leadership needed to realize the school's long-term vision, on a day-to-day basis, Renaissance Montessori has close ties with The Montessori Foundation, which is a separate, non-profit, international educational organization, instrumental in the original development of Renaissance Montessori.

The Montessori Foundation is dedicated to the advancement of Montessori education in the United States and abroad. For more information, go to [www.montessori.org](http://www.montessori.org).

## **2.0 Administration**

### **Directors of School**

Marc Seldin and Rachel Kincaid are both directors of Renaissance Montessori.

Marc Seldin is charged with implementing the school's long-range plan and overseeing the effective administration of all aspects of the school's operations.

Rachel Kincaid is the lead teacher. She will oversee all of the school's educational, extra-curricular programs and community outreach.

## 3.0 Student Life

### 3.1 Renaissance Montessori's Fundamental Ground Rules

As a school founded on Montessori ideals, we believe that every person deserves respect. Renaissance Montessori expects students to demonstrate kindness, courtesy, and respect toward the school, fellow students, parents, teachers, and staff.

The goal of a Montessori education is to establish a safe, warm, and caring environment within which we teach students positive and appropriate ways to handle situations, as opposed to assuming that misbehavior and punishment are inevitable. We also seek to develop a strong sense of self-discipline, responsibility, and courtesy, and to develop an atmosphere conducive to peaceful studies.

Please review these rules with your child:

- Be kind and gentle to one another.
- Everyone has a right to privacy and concentration. Please do not disturb anyone who is trying to concentrate on his or her work.
- Everyone has a right to his or her personal belongings. Please do not touch anything that is not yours without the owner's permission. If you accidentally lose or break something, please replace.
- Everyone here has the right to feel safe and secure. We encourage all

people to use words that do not insult or threaten someone else.

- Everyone here has the right to be physically safe. Do not hurt or endanger anyone.
- At Renaissance Montessori, no one is allowed to fight, push, trip, or use any other aggressive behaviors.
- Use the playground equipment as intended. For example, go down the slide and up the ladder.
- Let everyone who wants to play have the opportunity to join in your game.
- Do not throw mulch, sticks or rocks.
- Do not leave your teacher's supervision without permission.
- Do not roughhouse or play carelessly.
- Put all balls, ropes, and other outdoor equipment away when you are finished playing with them.

When anyone at Renaissance Montessori finds it difficult to follow the school's guidelines for personal conduct, we will quickly bring the student, family, and staff together to work toward a solution.

The Renaissance Montessori campus is a smoke-free area. No one may smoke on campus, including the parking lot, or at any school-sponsored trip, party, or other activity.

The entire school community (teachers, students, and administrators) is responsible for helping to maintain the order and neatness of the school environment.

- If you make a mess, clean it up.
- Everyone is expected to help keep the school litter-free by picking up any trash or belongings that are found out of place.
- Do not throw trash on the ground, indoors or out.
- Students are expected to help with the daily clean-up in their class areas.

### 3.2 Discipline

Discipline means “to teach.” At Renaissance Montessori, we use a positive, non-violent approach to discipline. We notice the things that our students are doing correctly and encourage them in that regard. Examples are: “You concentrated so well on that activity.” “Thank you for being so patient or cooperative.” “Thanks for welcoming our visitor. That was so friendly.” “You are really being creative today.” In addition, we use neutral moments to teach social skills through role-plays, discussions, and skits so that our students have practiced appropriate language and actions before situations arise. A large piece of our curriculum at all levels is “Grace and Courtesy,” which includes control of movement and manners. Should a conflict occur, our students are coached in conflict-resolution skills and community meeting skills. If a pattern of misbehavior continues, then the parents will be contacted to help determine the cause and find solutions.

We follow an approach based on empowerment, mutual respect, and trust. Neither corporal punishment nor physical or emotional intimidation are allowed at

Renaissance Montessori. If anyone consciously or flagrantly violates the social contract regarding safety, kindness, and courtesy, our response is to identify the appropriate and natural consequences of these actions. For example, if something is broken, it must be replaced or repaired, preferably not by the parents alone, but by the student whose actions led to the damage.

Any theft, vandalism, or damage to property, whether deliberate or accidental, must be repaired or repaid.

We have worked together to create a system of ground rules and discipline that is firm, fair, and consistent in order to help students maintain the school’s values and character. All students are expected to adhere to and respect them to protect one another. Renaissance Montessori expects full cooperation from students and families during school hours or whenever the student/family represents the school, whether on Renaissance Montessori property or away from the campus.

The school must always be a safe learning environment. Any student who repeatedly breaks the ground rules, or interferes with the health, safety, or educational development of him or herself, other students, faculty, or staff, may be temporarily or permanently excluded from attendance at school by the Director or his or her designee. In this extreme situation, we need to reiterate that there will be no reduction, credit, or remission of tuition or fees.

### 3.3 Starting School

#### Readiness

Prior to entering Renaissance Montessori, all children must be potty trained and can use toilet with little assistance. Pull ups are not permitted.

Even very young children tend to have a general idea of what “going to school” means. However, the actual event is sometimes overwhelming for both child and adult. Renaissance Montessori will help you both with starting school.

Whether it’s your first day at Renaissance Montessori, or the first day of the new school year, many young children and their parents feel a bit nervous when they leave one another and are in an unfamiliar situation. A few tears may even be expected.

Here are a few points that will help each of you establish some comfort with school.

- Try to keep the morning stress free but on a normal schedule.
- Remind each other that you both have been looking forward to “going to school.”
- Remind each other that the children at school are just like you and that the adults at school love children.
- Use the teacher’s name whenever possible.
- Remind each other of how proud you both are that this “first day” is here.
- If this is your child’s first year at Renaissance Montessori, we encourage you to visit the campus frequently before school starts to allow him or her to become familiar

with the new setting. Generally, be reassuring as you talk with your child about his or her new school.

On the first day of school, please don’t linger too long in the lobby or react with alarm if your child is hesitant about the separation. It is very important to reassure him or her about where you will be during the day and by what time you will pick him/her up in the afternoon. Some children may be sad for a little while during the first few days, but kind words and reassurance almost always alleviate their fears. The teachers are wonderful in helping the children through these situations.

#### Pick up, drop off procedure

##### Half day

8:30 -8:45	Drop off
12:15 - 12:30	Pick up

##### Full day

8:30 – 8:45	Drop off
3:00 - 3:45	Pick up

##### Extended day

7:45 - 8:00	Drop off
5:30 – 6:00	Pick up

Parents are to bring child into the foyer. Sign your child in in the lobby. Child will put personal belongings in their assigned cubby and put on their slippers. Your child’s teacher will greet him/her by class room door.

At 8:45 the class room door will be closed. Should you arrive to school after that, please say goodbye and have your child gently open the door.

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Your child may be picked up starting at 12:15. Please sign your child out, and wait for the teacher to dismiss your child. After 12:30, you will be charged \$1.00 per minute. Late charges need to be paid within five school days to the office.

### **3.4 Attendance Policy**

All students are expected to attend school on a daily basis, arriving before the start of the school day.

Even though we are less formal and more flexible than many schools, consistent attendance and prompt arrival are still essential.

Students are expected to be in class by 8:45 a.m.; to be present in class for the full school day (or for the full morning session in the case of students enrolled for the half-day program); and at other required school activities.

Late arrival is disruptive and inconsiderate to the rest of the class, and nothing can be more disruptive to a child's education than irregular attendance. Consistency and routine are important to every child's development, but they are especially important for younger students. We depend on your family's full support in this area. If we find that your child is frequently absent without a reasonable excuse or is arriving late, we will need to meet to work out a solution. While we are understanding and supportive, it is still important that you keep your child's absences from school to a minimum.

Although our program is individualized, it still depends upon consistency and continuous progress. Every time children miss school for whatever reason, there is a period of readjustment as they try to get back into the routine of their school work. The longer the absence, or when children consistently miss a day or two of school here, and a day or two there, the more detrimental it becomes to their educational development.

Please call the front office 919-439-0130 between 8:30-9:00 a.m. if your child is absent for any reason. This will save unnecessary calls by the school staff. On the day following your child's absence, please send a note to the office stating the reason for the absence.

Extended absences may require a doctor's verification.

Parents who wish to have students released from school prior to the end of the academic day must provide a dismissal slip to the classroom teacher. For emergencies, please notify the office 919-439-0130.

### **3.5 School Dress Code**

There are two basic reasons that a School Dress Code is employed. Emotionally, children need not feel the power or the defensiveness that "fashion" can create, even in very young children. The child, not the empowerment that clothes can create (or take away), is the issue at Renaissance Montessori. No emotional or

social advantage should be sought through children's fashion. Secondly, Renaissance Montessori works very hard to create a safe physical environment and, therefore, asks that children wear comfortable clothing, with closed toe shoes with backs.

- Children should dress in clothing that they can put on and fasten for themselves: elastic waistbands, Velcro™ sneakers, etc.
- Children should wear closed shoes with non-slip soles at all times. (They should not come to school wearing sandals, flip-flops, shoes with cleats, or roller shoes.)
- Please help your child choose clothing that is free of advertisements, characters and loud graphic images.
- Younger students should wear belts, jeans with snaps and buttons, zippers, etc. only as they are able to dress and undress themselves independently. Should a bathroom emergency arise, your child should be able to quickly undress and redress himself.
- *Please label all students clothing.*

Also, please adhere to the following requirements:

- Jewelry can cause a significant distraction; therefore, we ask students to limit jewelry.

### 3.6 Supplies Students Need at School

- An extra set of clothing, including socks, to be kept at school, held in a one-gallon Ziploc™-type bag labeled with your child's name.
- Toys should not be brought to school.

- Each class schedules a time for Show and Tell. Your child's teachers will inform you of their expectations. Children enjoy bringing in an item from nature, a special souvenir from a trip, something they have made, or their favorite books. Again, please do not send in toys, dolls or action figures.
- Snack will be provided by the school.

### 3.7 Lost and Found

Everything brought to school should be clearly marked with the owner's name. Any unlabeled belongings that are found will be kept in our lost and found in the office for a month, during which time we will attempt to identify to whom they belong. After a month, any items that are still unclaimed will be given to Goodwill.

### 3.8 Snacks

Children will have one nutritional snack. We also have many food preparation lessons that include fruit, veggies, cheese, etc. We serve water and milk. Parents may be assigned a day to bring in supplies for snack on a rotating basis, likely to be twice a month.

**Special Dietary Restrictions:** Some students may follow a special diet for religious or medical reasons. Please be sure to notify the teachers if your child should avoid certain foods. This will be taken into account in planning snacks or

on days when the class prepares its own lunch or snack. We will accommodate unique allergies and medical conditions wherever possible.

### **3.9 Lunch**

Lunch boxes must be labeled with child's full name. We encourage reusable lunch boxes.

The USDA meal patterns specify a minimum requirement to comply with licensing standard to include:

- ¾ cup milk (must be liquid)
- 1.5 oz. meat or other protein
- vegetable, fruit or 1 cup 100% fruit juice
- grains: (½ slice bread, 1/3 cup cold cereal or ¼ cup pasta)

Periodically, we must check to determine if your child's lunch complies with the minimum licensing standard. As a policy, we will supplement any child's lunch to meet the USDA requirements and charge parents a nominal sum. We encourage parents to establish healthy habits early on. Processed sweets and empty calorie food will be discouraged if not prohibited.

### **3.10 Field Trips**

Classes may periodically take field trips to local points of interest during the year. They are planned to coordinate with subjects being studied by a class or to take advantage of special community events. Notice of upcoming events will be sent home in advance. Parents will provide transportation for their child and

are asked to join the class in these activities.

### **3.11 Birthdays**

Children love to celebrate their birthdays with their friends. We have a special birthday ceremony in which we tell the class the story of the birthday child's life. Please send in a photograph of your child at each age level: at birth; one year-old; age two; etc. You will also want to send in a short written narrative describing some of the things that were happening in your child's life and your family at each age level. It is especially nice to send in a special (nutritious or low-sugar) snack in honor of your child's birthday.

Please do not send birthday invitations to school to be passed out. They should be sent through the mail.

### **3.12 Celebrations**

From time to time over the year, classes will present lessons or activities designed to bring cultural celebrations to life. They are designed to explore the culture and traditions of other nations or cultural groups within the United States from a child's perspective, as is appropriate to the age level of the class. Some have their origin in religious tradition, such as Christmas, Hanukah, Easter, and Passover, which are typically presented at low key and simple levels. Some may involve international festivals that we may celebrate as part of our studies of other countries, such as Diwali from India and Loy Krathong from Thailand. Some of

the other holidays that we celebrate at the class or school-wide level include:

- International Children's Day
- Thanksgiving
- Winter Festival
- African American History Month and Martin Luther King's Birthday
- Grandparents' Day
- Valentine's Day
- Presidents' Day
- Earth Day

We do not teach religion, even though some of the cultural activities are religious in their origin. In such cases, we present them from an age-appropriate child's perspective, as special days of family feasting, merriment, and wonder. Young children rarely catch more than a glimmer of the religious meaning behind the celebration. Our goal is to use cultural celebration to build a sense of community within the classroom and to introduce children to the different cultures of the world. We focus on how children would normally experience a festival within their culture: the special foods, songs, dances, games, stories, present—a potpourri of experiences aimed at all the senses of a young child.

On the other hand, one of our fundamental aims is the inspiration of the child's heart. While we do not teach religion, we do present the great moral and spiritual themes, such as love, kindness, joy, and confidence in the fundamental goodness of life in simple ways that encourage the child to begin the journey toward being fully alive and fully human. Everything that we do is intended to nurture a sense of joy and

appreciation of life, a sense of the poetic, and humanity's interrelationship with the Earth.

It does not help to avoid the issue of cultural differences. We teach our students to understand and accept them. Truly, though we are all the same inside, we are very different from one another in the ways we live our lives and perceive the world. To build peace, we must learn to see people as they really are and not be afraid of that which is different from our own ways.

While Dr. Montessori felt that we must teach our children how to live in peace and how to make a positive contribution to the society in which they live, she believed, first, in the importance of nurturing and protecting the dignity and integrity of the individual.

We will always let families know about any cultural celebrations that are planned in advance. Please contact us if you ever have any questions, or if you are uncomfortable having your child participate in a particular topic.

## **4.0 Health and Safety**

### **4.1 When Your Child is Ill**

Whenever your child is ill and will not be coming to school, please call the school office in the morning between 8:30 am and 9:00 am to let us know that he, or she, will be absent.

Students with infectious diseases, such as chicken pox or strep throat, must stay out of school until the contagious stage has passed. For the sake of the other children's health, it is vital that you let the office know your child's diagnosis as soon as possible.

Please keep your child home as long as there is a fever present, a sore throat, eye infection, continuous and colored nasal excretions, or persistent chest cough. We determine the need to send a child home by both the symptoms listed above and by their behavior. Children who fall asleep during the morning work cycle or who are unusually cranky or sad during the day (not their usual temperament) may be sent home. Students with symptoms of vomiting, diarrhea, head lice, or an undiagnosed skin rash should remain at home also. Students will be sent home if any of the above symptoms appear while they are at school. They should remain at home for at least the next 24 hours.

## 4.2 If Your Child Gets Sick at School

In the classrooms, the teachers are diligent about assisting children with keeping their noses and faces clean and free of mucous. The children are learning this process but require more adult intervention during the times of the year when illness is more prevalent. We teach children how to blow their noses and wash their hands. We strongly encourage parents to help their children practice these skills at home and support these very important self-help skills.

If your child ever feels ill, we will keep him, or her, quiet and comfortable. If he, or she, seems to be too ill to remain in school, we will contact you to arrange for him, or her, to be picked up within an hour. If a parent cannot be reached within half an hour, we will begin calling the emergency contacts on the "Medical Emergency Information" form that is kept on file in the office. The child will be isolated from the rest of the children in the office until someone is able to take him/her home. We understand how difficult it can be for working parents to break free during the day, yet all of our children get ill from time to time. **You will want to make arrangements in advance with a friend or a relative for any times when you cannot come yourself.**

Because colds, flu, and other childhood illnesses spread from child to child with alarming speed, please do not send your child to school if he, or she, has a fever, is nauseous, or displays any other symptoms of illness.

Weather permitting students will go outside to play every day. If you feel that your child may be too sick to go out to play, then he should not come to school until he can participate in all school activities.

## 4.3 Emergency Care

In the event of any medical situation that requires immediate medical attention, we will want your child to see a doctor right away. Please remember to keep your Emergency Medical Information form up

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to date in the office. **We must be able to reach you at any time during the school day.**

If your child needs immediate medical attention and you cannot be reached, your enrollment agreement authorizes us to seek medical care in your name. We will take your child to the emergency room at Rex Hospital. Naturally, we will continue our efforts to contact you. If your child should need basic first aid, a trained staff person will administer aid while other staff continues to contact parents and/ or medical professionals.

#### **4.4 Medication**

We **do not** administer medication at school including aspirin or other over-the-counter drugs or topical creams.

Antibiotics and other medications should be scheduled so that dosages are taken during hours when the student is at home. When children are so ill as to require frequent medication, they probably should not be in school for a full day.

We also ask that students do not bring vitamins, flower essences, or other homeopathic remedies to school.

When, in the opinion of your child's physician, it is necessary that medication be administered during school hours, a parent must administer the medication to his/her child in accordance with the following procedures:

Medication may not be stored at the school.

Our staff members are prohibited from providing or administering any medication, including aspirin, to any student.

#### **4.5 Safety Drills**

The office will conduct monthly drills that respond to a number of safety challenges. If parents are on campus during a drill, they are expected to join the drill as directed.

- The alarm will ring continuously in the event of a fire or a drill.
- When the bell rings, all classes will dismiss into designated areas and remain in their groups.
- The teachers will make certain that the room is empty and close the doors.
- The teachers will join the class outside the building, take attendance, and notify the office if anyone is missing.
- Students and teachers are expected to remain in the designated area until informed that they may return to class.

#### **No firearm permitted on campus**

#### **4.6 Incident Reports**

In the event that a child has a behavioral incident or is injured at school, the teacher or staff member in attendance will complete an Incident Report. This form will explain the circumstances of the incident. Parents will be asked to read the report, sign it, leave a copy at the school,

and take a copy home. Feel free to call us if you have additional questions related to the incident.

#### **4.7 Child Abuse Reporting Policy**

NC Statute requires anyone who knows of, or has reasonable cause to suspect, child abuse, abandonment, or neglect, to immediately report such knowledge or suspicion. Renaissance Montessori School employees, who are acting in their official or professional capacity and become aware or suspect that a student has suffered, faces the threat of any physical or mental wound, injury, disability, or condition that reasonably indicates child abuse or neglect, shall immediately notify the National Child Abuse Hotline (1-800-4-A-CHILD).

#### **4.8 School Cancellation Due to Weather**

If severe weather conditions make travel hazardous, school will open late, close early, or be cancelled. We will make these decisions based on the safety of students and staff and in accordance with the Wake Co. Public Schools. Closing will be broadcast to parents by email, text messaging, or the class telephone chain.

In the event of a hurricane watch, the school will remain open. If a hurricane warning should go into effect during school hours, parents will be called to pick up their children, and the school will remain closed as long as the warning is in effect. We will try home, work, and cell numbers. Please keep us up to date with these numbers throughout the year.

## **5.0 Faculty and Staff**

Renaissance Montessori is committed to setting high professional standards for personnel and programs. Our promise is to physically and emotionally protect all students, and deliver the highest quality instruction and learning experience. You will find a directory of our faculty and staff and their backgrounds on the school website: [www.renaissancescholars.com/](http://www.renaissancescholars.com/).

All members of our faculty and staff share:

- Commitment to children's well being
- Commitment to Montessori education
- Loyalty to Renaissance Montessori's vision and mission
- Ability to work with others in delivering quality education

Our faculty and staff:

- Support the school's mission and each other.
- Abide by established professional standards and the conditions of our accreditation.
- Abide by the laws of the State of NC and all federal laws that govern our relationship and our work.
- Submit for local and federal background checks. (All volunteers who spend time with children must also have the same background check.)

All members of our faculty and staff are supervised and reviewed as indicated by the Director and are consistently guided to set goals for themselves and their programs.

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## 6.0 Parents and the School

### 6.1 Creating Partnership

Parent involvement creates partnerships, builds community within the school, and gives the children a sense of connection outside the school day. Being directly involved in the school also provides an opportunity to view the school from a unique, internal perspective, giving families a much deeper appreciation for how devoted the teachers are to the children and how committed the administration is to their vision.

We encourage families to feel at home and participate in the broader life of the school through social, educational, and volunteer activities. As a community of parents and educators, our ideas and input help to literally shape the school.

### 6.2 Volunteering the Gift of Time and Talent

Parents play a crucial role at Renaissance Montessori. This is a community of parents and educators, many of whom are also Renaissance Montessori parents as well.

Renaissance Montessori strongly encourages families to feel at home and to participate in the broader life of the school through social and educational activities, committees, task forces, and the class and school-wide community meetings. Many parents spend a considerable amount of time at

Renaissance Montessori as volunteers. We appreciate it immensely!

One of the most valuable contributions that families make to the school is the gift of their time and expertise. Parents, grandparents, and friends of the school are often found helping out in the office, assisting in the classrooms, planning the next special event, or serving on school committees.

Parents and grandparents, who give of their time and talent, share with their families special memories of experiences and friendships that endure well beyond their children's graduations.

#### **A few ways in which you can help out at Renaissance Montessori School:**

- Volunteer a few hours a week to help in the office
- Lend your time and support to our fundraising efforts
- Volunteer to be an Ambassador Family to parents new to the school
- Serve on one of the school's committees
- Help the teachers organize field trips or special lessons
- Help organize special events
- Share your talents and special interests
- Serve as a Room Parent
- Attend Class Meetings
- Attend Community Meetings

Renaissance Montessori depends on our combined talents.

## 6.3 Communication between Home and School

Communication between school and parents is vital. Feel free to ask questions or discuss anything related to your child's progress.

Please remember that the teachers' responsibility during the school day is to the children.

Morning arrival and dismissal times are particularly sensitive transition periods when the students need the attention of their teachers. For this reason, we ask that interruptions during these times be kept to a minimum.

If you must speak to your child's teacher in the morning, make arrangements to do so before school begins. Likewise, you can make arrangements to speak to the teacher after school. Otherwise, you can correspond via a note or email, and the teacher will get back to you by phone or will send a note to set up a conference.

During the school year, we will send home emails, letters, notes, newsletters, and announcements. Generally, such information will be sent electronically directly to your email address. Occasionally, we will send home some printed correspondence with your child in the weekly Friday Folders.

**Please check your email daily.** We use email, Facebook™, Twitter™, the school's website, and other online resources to communicate with families. This saves trees. Important emails and

announcements are archived in the password-protected area of our website: [www.renaissancescholars.com](http://www.renaissancescholars.com).

## 6.4 Communication with Second Families

Whenever parents are separated, divorced, or for some other reason are not living at the same address, we want to keep both parents informed of their child's progress and school matters.

- Both parents at their respective addresses, at no extra cost, will receive copies of progress reports and announcements mailed out or sent home with students. Likewise, all school emails will be sent to both parents.
- Invitations to school functions will be sent to both parents.
- When family conferences are scheduled, we need to avoid separate conferences for each parent. It is very important to communicate the same thing to both parents at the same time. If either parent is uncomfortable with scheduling joint conferences, he or she should contact the office to discuss the situation.
- We encourage both parents to attend all school events.
- Free and open communication among all parties is encouraged so that everyone is fully informed.
- An exception may be requested by a court order prior to the child's entering school by either one or both parents. The request would require full consideration of the legal ramifications and other relevant

matters, to the effect that dual communication is not required, desired, or to be pursued.

- If granted, this exception (documentation by a signed court order) would be noted in the child's permanent file and honored as indicated.

## 6.5 Observing the Classes at Work

Parents are invited, and even urged, to observe the children at work. Contact your child's teachers to let them know when you would like to visit. Unless arrangements have been made in advance, they may not have time to speak with you. You will want to see the class at its normal routine and not responding to the novelty of your presence; therefore, when you visit, please sit in the designated visitor's chair in the classroom. A great deal can be learned by patient and quiet observation of your child and his, or her, classmates at work.

During the first sensitive weeks of the school year, students (especially the younger children) are familiarizing themselves with a new routine and new environment. For this reason, we ask parents to avoid class observations during these periods.

All visitors and volunteers need to sign in and obtain a visitor name tag from the school office upon arrival. You may also be given an Observation Feedback form that will assist you in observing and will

give us much appreciated feedback about the classrooms.

### Points to Look for When You Observe

- As you sit down to carefully observe in a Montessori classroom for the first time, what catches your eye? What do you notice on your second or third visit?
- How is the classroom organized? What do you notice about the layout of activities, furnishings, and shelves?
- Pay attention to the way the adults interact with the children. What do you notice?
- Perhaps, during your observation you will see the teacher redirect or discipline a child. What do you notice?
- As you observe, try to look for any unwritten rules and procedures that the children are following.
- Focus on a particular child other than your own. Follow his, or her, work during the course of at least a half hour. How does she spend her time? How does she select work?
- We are hopeful that you will see the teachers present several different lessons to either small groups or individual children during your visit. What do you notice about the way they teach?
- What do you notice about the educational materials on the shelves and how the children work with them?
- What about the Montessori materials seems to be most attractive to the children?

- Focus on a few different Montessori materials. What concepts or skills does each isolate?
- How do the teachers introduce the children to the materials? Try to catch one child learning from another.
- Try to observe children correcting their own work through the control of error built into each Montessori material. How do they self-correct?
- As you observe the children at work, do you sense that there are certain tasks that the children prefer? Are there any that they seem to avoid?
- How do you, as an adult, respond to the Montessori materials? Are you drawn to them? Do you wish that you could have gone to a Montessori school?
- What sort of interactions do you notice between the younger and older students?
- During your observation, did the teachers spend most of their time with the younger or older students?
- Based upon what you observed, try to determine what factors led them to concentrate most of their attention on one age group or another?

## 6.6 “So, What Did You Do At School Today?”

Have you experienced frustration when asking this question? Did you get the common answer, “Nothing”? Or, possibly, your child tells you every day that he or she did the same thing-such as play-dough or spooning beans. Do not be alarmed. We can assure you that your

child is very busy at school doing a variety of learning activities designed to support her development.

Young children, in particular, often have difficulty talking about what they do at school. They have done so many things that they often cannot sort out the specifics. Sometimes they don’t remember the name of the materials that they used - such as the trinomial cube, the metal insets, or the addition strip board.

In addition to the difficulty children may have in talking about their school experience, you may have noted that not many papers come home depicting your child’s work. They can be doing complex math, word-building, writing in a sand tray or on chalkboards, geography, or science lessons-all with manipulative materials that will have no paperwork to show you their progress.

### **How can you find out what your child is doing in school?**

- Ask your child questions that are more specific. “Did you do a counting lesson today? Did you build the tower or work with colors?”
- Occasionally, **plan to stay** after dismissal and take your child into the classroom in order for him, or her, to show you his, or her, favorite lessons. Please be aware of the teacher’s time for clean-up and planning at the end of the day.
- Set up a time to observe your child in class.
- Read a Montessori book. There are several books available to check-out in

our parent lounge. Please see a staff member to borrow any of the books you see.

- Stop in after school and talk to your child's teacher(s), or set up an appointment for a formal conference if you prefer.
- Attend school meetings and workshops.
- Play 'school' with your child at home. Sometimes, children will show you through their play what they are learning.
- Be patient. In time, it will be obvious that your child is growing and learning every day.

## 6.7 Supporting Your Child's Experience at Home

Parents are often amazed by the level of independence and sense of responsibility they observe in their children when they are in their Montessori community. Parents often ask, "How can we get them to be this way at home?" Typically, home is a more laid back environment than school (as it should be). One can, however, encourage more independence and responsibility at home by applying some of the same principles we apply when preparing our classrooms.

Here are some suggestions to help bridge the school and home experience and assist your child in feeling that he or she is a capable person and a contributing member of the family.

- Provide a stable stool to assist your child in reaching the sink, light

switches, toothbrushes, books, toys, and other items of personal use.

- Hang clothes on a low rack in the closet so that the child can hang up his own clothes. Organize clothing in drawers, grouped for mixing and matching to make choosing clothing easier. Keep appropriate school clothes separate from play clothes to avoid a morning argument.
- Encourage your child to help with laundry. Younger children can fold and help put clothes away. Older children can actually be taught to do their own laundry.
- Hang mirrors and art at your child's eye level (at least in their room; but a few carefully placed in other areas of the house are nice, too).
- Place appropriate, nutritious food items in a lower cabinet so that your child can prepare his/her own snack when hungry.
- Place every day dishes in a lower cabinet so children can help unload the dishwasher. This also helps when children are preparing snacks.
- Put milk, juice, and water, in smaller containers in the refrigerator so the child will be able to successfully get his own drink.
- Provide clean-up supplies for your child and give him a lesson in how to clean-up his own messes. (Suggested supplies: small broom and dustpan, carpet sweeper, dust buster, sponges, and towels.)
- Place toys, art supplies, and books on reachable shelves instead of in a toy box. Rotate these items so that the child has only a manageable amount out at any given time. Use baskets, desk organizers, and crates to keep

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'like' items together and to display them in an attractive manner.

- Provide a shelf or an area in every room for your child to keep some of his/her activities.
- Create a self-quieting corner for each child, so they have a special place to go when they need to calm themselves or when you need to recommend that they take some time to calm down and get centered.
- Ask yourself, "What new thing can I show my child how to do for him, or herself, this week?"
- Invite an older child to help reorganize or redecorate his room.
- Involve even the youngest children in chores around the house, increasing the expectation as the child gets older.
- Make sure your child has a comfortable place to do homework, research, and special projects.
- Monitor and limit TV and computer time.
- Read to your child (no matter how old he or she is, read together!)
- Talk about feelings with your child.
- Use natural consequences instead of punishment. Natural consequences are the result of an action taken by a child that actually helps a child, without adult intervention, to learn about how that action affects them and others.

## 6.8 Class and Community Meetings

Each month during the school year, Renaissance Montessori parents, teachers, administrators, and interested

students are invited to meet together for Class and Community Meetings. This tradition offers us the opportunity to explore issues of common interest in an open community forum. Frequently, the Community Meeting will offer formal feedback and advice to the administration and Board. Parents and teachers who participate tend to gain a much deeper understanding of the school's mission, strengths, and the issues that challenge it. Many will appreciate the opportunity to have a voice in the life of the school.

Class Meetings are normally held in the classrooms. Discussions often focus on the classroom and what they've been doing in the last month and what's coming up in the month ahead. All sorts of questions come up and are discussed.

Community Meetings offer us a meaningful opportunity to participate in the development of school programs and policy. Most members of the faculty and administration will normally attend.

Community Meetings usually begin with all present agreeing on the topics that they would like to address. One member of the community will be selected to facilitate the meeting, ensuring that everyone is heard and helping the group maintain its focus. A recorder will prepare a summary of what was discussed and a list of any topics to be addressed at the next scheduled meeting.

Community Meetings are process oriented. Their value comes from personal attendance and participation. They provide a forum for the open exchange of

ideas, not necessarily to produce answers or proposals. Many school-related issues cannot be addressed and resolved in a large-group problem-solving setting.

In the normal course of discussion, the group may identify issues that should be addressed by the faculty, administration, or trustees. At times, they may ask the school to make a more formal presentation on a given topic of interest. Any topic that is raised during a meeting that would properly require time to prepare hand-outs and clarify information will be tabled and scheduled for the next meeting.

The focus of Community Meetings is on topics of common interest, not individual issues concerning one family, which normally cannot be discussed in a public setting.

Because the purpose of these meetings is to facilitate communication, all views will be heard and discussed. It is perfectly normal for values and perspectives to vary within the group. As members of a school community that teaches children kindness and respect, it is very important for us, as parents and teachers, to model a high level of consideration and respect for each other. No one can be allowed to dominate a meeting; it is neither appropriate nor fair to the larger group. Everyone present will be encouraged to participate and contribute; however, silence is a legitimate part of any meeting.

Finally, we should all strive to remember that we are on the same side. We share many common values and interests that

brought us together. We need never see ourselves as adversaries, even if we should disagree on a given issue. Concerns and issues that need to be explored and addressed are normal in any institution. There is no such thing as a perfect school, and there will always be a need for new ideas and ongoing improvements.

People who benefited from Montessori education:

Larry Paige and Sergey Brin, founders of Google Inc., reflected on their own experience. *"We both went to Montessori school, and I think it was part of that training of not following rules and orders, being self-motivated, questioning what's going on in the world, and doing things a little bit different, that contributed to our success."*

## **7.0 Academic Life**

### **7.1 Family Conferences**

It is very important for teachers and parents to establish and maintain close communication. Please feel free to ask questions or to discuss anything related to your child's progress. We ask, however, that you understand that the teachers' responsibilities during the school day are to the students. Morning arrival, in particular, is a very sensitive period when the teachers are greeting each student and setting a calm, pleasant tone for the day. Interruptions need to be kept to a minimum. If you must speak with a teacher in the morning, please make arrangements to meet before school

begins. Otherwise, you can correspond via a note, or email and the teachers will get back to you by phone or will send a note to set up a conference as needed.

Conferences are scheduled throughout the year. See the school calendar for details. Additional conferences will be scheduled upon request. For our young students who are new to Renaissance Montessori School, a Home Visit may be scheduled before school begins in August.

## **7.2 Evaluations of Student Progress**

Our Montessori curriculum is carefully structured and sequenced. The teachers maintain careful records of each student's academic progress.

Because Montessori schools do not compare students against an arbitrary standard or to the performance of their classmates, we do not use familiar letter grades. Parents will receive student evaluations in January and June to review the student's development and to discuss how the Montessori program is contributing to the student's growth.

## **7.3 Student Learner Outcomes**

Montessori is designed to allow for individualized student progress. They represent a level of skill and knowledge that we expect most of our students to display before advancing to the next level.

The school stimulates and supports students in their pursuit of personal mastery of any given subject area(s).

## **7.4 Privacy of Student Files**

Student files are confidential records and are kept secure from unauthorized access.

Parents or guardians may have access to the child's file by written request to the office at least twenty-four hours in advance. The file must be viewed in the presence of a Renaissance Montessori staff member. If a parent/guardian disagrees with any item in the file, a note may be inserted into the permanent file with relevant comments.

Officials of the State or County Health Department may have the right to view student files without the parents' or guardians' permission. However, with a written court order, other government officials may inspect the contents of a student's file without the permission of the student or parent/guardian, and the school will inform the student and his, or her, family in writing that such an inspection has been requested or made.

A copy of the student's file may be sent to an outside professional, such as a psychologist or educational diagnostician, if requested in writing by the parent(s), guardian(s), or student if he or she has attained the age of 18, with notation of pertinent papers to be sent.

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## 8.0 Financial Policies

### 8.1 Tuition Policies

Student accounts must be kept up to date. Your cooperation is essential and very much appreciated.

Families are responsible for prompt payment of all outstanding tuition and fees.

All monies due under the enrollment agreement are due and payable according to the terms of the contract. No extensions or delays in payment will be recognized unless in writing and signed by an authorized agent of the school and one of the signatories.

A 1% late tuition fee will accrue daily starting on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of each month.

### 8.2 Reenrollment

Invitations to continue at Renaissance Montessori are normally automatic but are not guaranteed. Decisions are made by the administration and faculty, based on an annual review of each student's academic progress, social and emotional development, any special needs (if applicable), along with the attitudes and values expressed by the child and parents. As always, our goal is to help each child and family find the right match between the student, home, and school.

Reenrollment materials will be mailed home in early February and are due back with the annual enrollment deposit by the date specified on the reenrollment

letter. If the school has not received a student's reenrollment materials by the date specified, his or her space will be made available to new students who have applied for admission to the school.

No student may begin the next school year if there is an outstanding balance remaining on his/her account.

## 9.0 Fundraising

**Renaissance Montessori School's Annual Fund** provides essential operating support for the school's budget. Unrestricted gifts to the Annual Fund are critical to the financial health of Renaissance Montessori School. The school's budget is dependent upon these contributions to help close the gap between the true cost of a Renaissance Montessori education and the revenue provided by tuition.

In addition to its financial impact, giving to the Annual Fund is a way of expressing confidence in, and support for, The Renaissance Montessori School. Participation by current parents, alumni, grandparents, and parents of alumni is essential to our school community.

### **The Spirit of Philanthropy: Why Give to Renaissance Montessori School**

The act of giving to charitable causes is known as *philanthropy*. A *philanthropist* is a person who donates time, talent and treasure and takes action to support the common good. Perhaps the greatest benefit of philanthropy is that it



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creates a positive impact. It can bring about very important changes. These changes create positive life experiences for others.

Giving to Renaissance Montessori is a great way to make a difference and create a positive life changing experience.

You probably have a dream about the extraordinary things your charitable gifts could accomplish now and for years to come. Partnering with Renaissance Montessori is the way to convert that personal dream into practical reality. The result is powerful!

Your support will allow us to define our future and prepare our students for their important part in tomorrow's exciting and unpredictable world.



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**AFFIRMATION OF RECEIPT OF COPY OF THE PARENT HANDBOOK**

According to NC Statutes, each family must sign and return the following written statement

I/We, \_\_\_\_\_, and  
\_\_\_\_\_ have  
received (please initial)

\_\_\_\_\_ The Renaissance Montessori School Parent Handbook, which includes the  
\_\_\_\_\_ School's discipline policy and child abuse procedures.

My child has permission to:

\_\_\_\_\_ walk outside the fenced in playground with adult supervision. (Fire drill)

Signed

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Print Name

\_\_\_\_\_

Print Name

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

Please sign and return this page to us at the school office.